

“Suicide or Service?”

Jonah 1.1-16

This ACADEMIC Year at ZGC > Sermons have FOCUSED on GOSPEL  
FALL: MISSION of Gospel: ACTS / SPRING: MESSAGE of Gospel / Galatians  
This MONTH See OURSELVES as MESSENGERS the Gospel

**MIDDLE > Leading our Friends to Christ > CONTINUE to Pray & Seek**

**Next 2 Sundays > GOOD to Bring UNBELIEVING Friends to ZGC**

Given TREASURE of GOSPEL > PASS it on TO OTHERS

JONAH > HONEST Struggles we ALL HAVE in Fulfilling this TASK

Only 3 Verses in Jonah About BIG Fish – FOCUS of Little Book on BIG GOD

Theme verse – “Salvation belongs to the LORD!” Jonah 2.9

Jonah – one of 12 MINOR PROPHETS – NOT in importance – LENGTH  
FROM NORTHERN Kingdom of ISRAEL > Sent as MISSIONARY to Nineveh  
Unlike other Prophetic books – MOSTLY AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
REAL MAN – TRUE STORY – FISH – // REAL AS RESURRECTION of Jesus  
EVENTS Sometime in 8<sup>th</sup> C B.C. / WHO? Wrote it and WHEN? NOT KNOWN

## 1. God’s Call

v. 1 “the word of the Lord came” – 100 X’s in OT

Usually followed by the specific message from God – Go! Preach!

DUTY OF GOD’S PEOPLE NOT CHANGED – almost 3000 years

1) GO 2) PREACH // marching orders King Jesus gave to His Church

GO – lit. in Hebrew “**get up and go**” – i.e. Do not delay, let nothing stop you

Jonah did not do so well – How about us?

Visited Lots of Churches in Many Countries - Lots of GOING

Not always for RIGHT REASONS or TO the RIGHT PLACES

Not always PREACHING – Want to be Understood, Accepted, Popular, SAFE  
TODAY’S CHURCH – Less Preaching More Entertainment, Therapy, Aerobics  
Recently > Great Feature of Church – Walk VISITORS to Toilets, Like at Home  
SAME Church AMBIGUOUS about IMPORTANT Distinctives of our FAITH

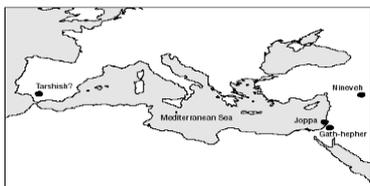
vs. 1,2 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,  
“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has  
come up before me.”

GO – to Place He has called – ex. Nineveh / PREACH – Eternal, Inerrant Word  
Jonah’s RESPONSE is IMMEDIATE, Got up RIGHT AWAY -- WRONG WAY  
v. 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

Shocking response – Amos – a Contemporary Prophet of Jonah  
“The lion has roared – who will not fear? The Sovereign Lord has spoken – who  
can but prophesy?” Amos 3.8 NOT JONAH!

JOPPA – modern day Jaffa – only natural harbor on coast of Palestine

TARSHIH – Probably South-western Spain– AS FAR AS POSSIBLE!



## 2. Servant’s Conflict

Why did Jonah take this ship to **Nowhereland**?

a. Circumstances > Guiding Principle // Many Christians his way Today

Just happened to be hanging out at Joppa – looked at watch 2.45 – saw on notice  
board – ship for Tarshish leaves at 3 o’clock – THIS IS GOD’S WILL FOR ME!

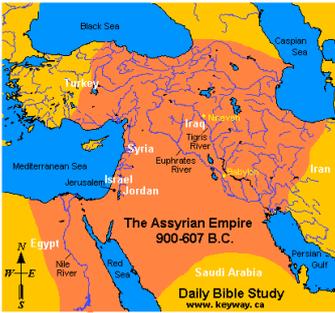
People are following God as they Think, Feel, and Experience – not Scripture

SHIP TO SPAIN MAY HAVE BEEN LEAVING THEN

GOD HAD ALREADY BOOKED JONAH ON CAMEL TRAIN TO NINEVEH

MODERN THEORY DOES NOT FIT THIS ANCIENT MAN – then, why??

b. Challenges – Nineveh was FAR – Journey long, tiring, expensive



Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left  
Jonah 4.11

Nineveh was BIG > 120,000 Little KIDS = MILLION?

Or JUST 120,000 MIXED UP FOOLS

v. 1 “Nineveh, that great city”

3.3 “exceedingly great city, three days' journey in breadth”

Such a mission was IMPOSSIBLE and RIDICULOUS – what could 1 man do?

c. Conflict v. 2 “for their evil has come up before me.”

The LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me.”  
Genesis 18.20,21

JONAH // Angels of GOD sent to ANNOUNCE Destruction of SODOM

Prophet Nahum – whole book describes the wickedness of Nineveh

“Woe to the city of blood, full of lies, full of plunder, never without victims! The crack of whips, the clatter of wheels, galloping horses and jolting chariots! Charging cavalry, flashing swords and glittering spears! Many casualties, piles of dead, bodies without number, people stumbling over the corpses” Nahum 3.1-3

PERHAPS JONAH THOUGHT HIS BODY WOULD BE THROWN ON PILE

// God calls us to Take GOOD NEWS of Jesus to Muslim World

Today Baptist Mission in USA > 3 X's more WOMEN than Men Signing to Go!

WE COULD UNDERSTAND SUCH IDEAS – Bible never gives such Reasons

#### d. Compassionless

Jonah had received Word of God and obeyed before – 2 Kings 14.25  
8<sup>th</sup> C – King Jeroboam 2 - godless king, mission was difficult and dangerous

“the word of the Lord, spoken thru his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet”  
2 Kings 14.25

LESSON – CANNOT LIVE ON YESTERDAY’S OBEDIENCE, SUCCESS

JONAH’S HEART HAD GROWN COLD – FAR FROM GOD

Why ran away? –

“O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster.”  
Jonah 4.2

“I knew you were a gracious and compassionate God”

Assyrians / Ninevites – Mortal enemies of the Jews

If warned of Judgment – They would Repent – God would Forgive – Mercy  
God should bless Israel – But Jonah would go to Hell before Nineveh got Heaven  
How about us? – We are sent to Nineveh – INTO WHOLE WORLD BY JESUS  
WHAT IS RESPONSE OF OUR HEART? – Mission Difficult and Dangerous

FOUNDERS of 2 Largest Religions in World – BOTH Called PROPHETS

Both BEGAN Ministries in STRONGLY Religious CITIES w/ Impt. SHRINES

JESUS was in JERUSALEM with its TEMPLE of the JEWS

600 yrs Later – MUHAMMED in MECCA with KAABA of ARABS

Both PROPHETS Preached Boldly – Created STIR – OPPOSED by Authorities

Those who REJECTED Muhammed in MECCA PLOTTED to KILL him

Remember how the Unbelievers plotted against thee, to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out (of thy home). They plot and plan, and God too plans, but the best of planners is God.  
The Qur’an, Surah 8:30

Muhammed's life Marked by HIJRA > Allah told to FLEE Mecca for Medina

After this FLIGHT/HIJRA – Allah gave NEW ORDERS to Muhammed

PICK Up SWORD for the SPREAD of ISLAM

And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you...And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out...if they fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers.

The Qur'an, Sura 2.190,191

ALLAH Sanctions Spread of Islam: KILLING & SUBJECTING Unbelievers

Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Apostle have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, out of those who have been given the Book, until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection.

The Qur'an, Sura 9.29

8 Centuries AFTER JONAH / 6 CENTURIES before MUHAMMED

JESUS the Prophet from NAZARETH – Attacked with Swords and Clubs

When FOLLOWERS tried to FIGHT Back > ORDERED them to Surrender

"Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?"

Matthew 26:52-54.

JESUS stayed in HOSTILE Jerusalem, NO HIJRA for Prophet from Nazareth

JESUS RESOLUTELY Strode into Jerusalem > NOT RUN OUT of the City

Fully KNOWING DETAILS of his Murder in City > He MARCHED IN

And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

Mark 10.32-34

### 3. Sin's Consequences

JONAH v. 3 "He went down to Joppa" / Geographically AND SPIRITUALLY  
THE WAY AWAY FROM GOD IS ALWAYS DOWN

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14.12

For the wages of sin is death... Romans 6.23

So too we can flee to our own Tarshish. We can so immerse ourselves in our irreligious society or in a godless social circle or in our own affairs and interests that the name of God is never spoken except in profanity and the works of God are never recalled. We can absent ourselves from all worship, all faith communities, all religious learning, all attempts to live by faith's ethic, and become totally secular – banishing God from our thought, our deeds, our devotion, our total view of the world. We can forget about God in 'Tarshish.' And perhaps Tarshish is a good name for our present culture. Elizabeth Achtemeier

v. 3 So he paid the fare

SAILORS NOT RETURN JONAH'S \$ BEFORE THROWING HIM IN SEA

Story of Moses – Mother loved him, but could not keep him, basket in Nile River

Found by Pharaoh's daughter – as Sister Miriam watched – she asked Daughter

"Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?"

Moses mother would have done anything to get her son back – scrubbed floors...

Amazing words > Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." Exodus 2.9

"When you run away from the Lord you never get to where you are going, and you always pay your own fare. But when you go the Lord's way you always get to where you are going, and He pays the fare" Donald Grey Barnhouse

How can a prophet of God imagine He can run away?

Very probable that as a Prophet – Jonah memorized these inspired words:

"Where could I go to escape from you? Where could I get away from your presence? ... If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest places in the west, you would be there to lead me" Psalm 139.7-10

**THE SAILORS – Disobedient Believers bring DANGER TO THE WORLD**

Achan stole some treasure from Jericho, all Israel was defeated at Ai

David took a census, 70,000 of his people died in the pestilence

Jonah ran from God – Now a Ship is about to SINK – SAILORS will Drown

We have to realize once again that this is how it usually is with the world; the storm is unleashed because of the unfaithfulness of the church and Christians. This being so, if the tempest is God's will to constrain his church, a will by which the whole human enterprise is endangered. Jacques Ellul

**GREAT STORM – these men had seen great storms before, but not like this**

v. 5 “Then the mariners were afraid”

// Disciples in boat – Great Storm / Fear --- But Jesus was in Boat

He calmed the wind and waves

But Jonah was IN their Boat – HE CAUSED THE WIND AND WAVES!

**SAILORS // LEADERS OF THIS WORLD – Trying their BEST**

Human plans to guide and control outworking of Divine Events in this World

Conferences – Meetings – Treaties – Even Wars – ALL MAN CAN DO

**DO NOT BLAME THE SAILORS – OR LEADERS OF THE WORLD**

Many times problems come when the Church is asleep during the Storm

KEITH GREEN described the Church as being ASLEEP IN THE LIGHT!

World DYING outside Church – We argue about Color of Sanctuary Carpet

**SO THE SAILORS TRY ALL THEIR WORLDLY WISDOM ALLOWS**

v. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god.

**INTERNATIONAL / INTER-RELIGIOUS PRAYER MEETING**

**RELIGIOUS RITUAL – God help us, whoever you are, any god will do!!**

**SCIENTIFIC ENTERPRISE – lighten the load so the ship will float more easily**

Jonah ASLEEP – NOT TROUBLED BY CONSCIENCE OR THE STORM  
WORLD REBUKES THE BELIEVER – Captain to Sleepy Head

v. 6 So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

How can you sleep? Get up and call on your god – WISDOM FROM GOD!!!  
Captain wonders whether God will have mercy / Jonah running because He does  
SAILORS ON DECK REALIZED THIS STORM WAS SUPERNATURAL

v. 9 And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Jonah was Preacher in Sin/ but he was Still a Preacher – NO ESCAPE  
GIFTS AND CALL OF GOD ARE IRREVOCABLE  
JONAH WILL PREACH TO SINNERS EVEN IF HE DROWNS WITH THEM

Perhaps there were even Ninevites among the Crew

v. 5 Then the mariners were afraid > Sailors AFRAID of the storm

v. 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid

TERRIFIED to learn Jonah was Hebrew running from His God

Word was well known about the God of the Hebrews

Sent the plagues upon Egypt to set His people free

Opened the Red Sea upon His people / Closed it upon Pharaoh and his troops

He stopped the River Jordan and toppled the walls of Jericho

THEY RIGHTLY ASK THIS REBEL PROPHET “What have you done?”

“What can we do to quiet the storm?” EASY AND SAFE ANSWER

TURN AROUND AND LET ME GO TO NINEVEH

STUBBORNESS of SIN // HARDNESS of Heart // Strength of REBELLION

JONAH “I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN SERVE GOD” – can you relate??

God had mercy on the Sailors – Even Rebellious Prophet effective ministry  
Like Apostle Paul – rode with pagan sailors through terrible storm near Crete  
“Now I beg you, take heart! Not one of you will lose his life, only the ship will  
be lost”  
Acts 27.22

v. 5 they feared something

v. 10 they feared the God of Jonah

v. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to  
the LORD and made vows.

SACRIFICES AND VOWS --- AFTER THE STORM WAS QUIET

Not unusual for people to call on God in the midst of terrible storm

AFTER THE STORM – MOST PEOPLE FORGET GOD – NOT SAILORS

Bob Kells in College – Shared Gospel – Not Interested > HOSPITALIZED

CALLED me to COME Pray for Me > PRAYED to RECEIVE Jesus

OUT of Hospital > HEALED > NO Time for God, NO NEED for God NOW

Jonah was running from God because he did not want sinners to be saved

EVEN IN JONAH’S RUNNING FROM GOD, SINNERS WERE SAVED

#### 4. God’s Character

MERCY OF GOD for those we do not Love

Neighbor whose dog fouls walkway in your apartment

Person of WRONG – Nationality, Language, Color, Size, or Gender Orientation

MANY OUTSIDE BOUNDARIES OF OUR CIRCLE OF LOVE

BUT THERE IS A WIDENESS TO GOD’S MERCY – UNLIMITABLE

ENDS – God’s Question – Echoes through centuries

“And should not I pity....?”      Jonah 4.11

## a. God's Salvation

Many Christian's think Salvation is MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY – we do it

All is well as long as WE OBEY – Stop Following, Start Losing Salvation

IF that were true – story would end at

v. 3 “But Jonah rose to flee...from the presence of the LORD.”

BUT 2.9 “Salvation comes from the Lord” – God has made a Covenant Promise

COVENANT WITH HIS SON – HE DIED FOR US – WE CANNOT BE LOST

v. 4 “But the LORD...” – JONAH RUNS, BUT GOD RUNS FASTER

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1.6

EVEN IF WE NEED TO BE SWALLOWED BY A GREAT FISH

## b. God's Sovereignty

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8.28

v.4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea

1.17 And the LORD appointed a great fish

4.6 Now the LORD God appointed a plant

4.7 God appointed a worm that attacked the plant

NO PROBLEM WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY IN NATURE – Gravity

PROBLEM – God's Sovereign Will – Conflicts with Human Will

Two Christians are Married – Bible says forever – ONE FALLS OUT OF LOVE  
OR MAYBE INTO LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE

“I know Bible says God hates divorce – but I do not care about that anymore”

Bibles sets forth MEANS OF GRACE to keep us STRONG IN HIS GRACE  
Bible reading, prayer, worship, witness, fellowship, tithing, repentance, faith  
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE IGNORE THESE THINGS?

Most of the time NOTHING AT ALL – slowly slide into own ways and ideas

GOD COULD CRUSH OUR WILL AND MAKE US OBEY // Pharoah

But God will GET OUR ATTENTION – in small things, and if necessary  
INCREASINGLY BIGGER THINGS > 10 Plagues INCREASED in Severity  
God took the Election of Jonah so seriously that He would even sink the Ship  
**Jonah CHOSE SUICIDE > STORM could be CALMED by a U-TURN!**

But God has NOT YET Released JONAH from MISSIONARY SERVICE!

THE GREATER HIS DISOBEDIENCE – THE GREATER GOD’S STORM  
SOVEREIGN GOD WILL SAVE HIS PEOPLE IN MERCY

NOTHING too HARD for HIM– SEND GREAT FISH Just a SMALL WORK  
JONAH was BELIEVER – Even a PROPHET – Who FORGOT God

PSALMIST Laments > ISRAEL had Similar MEMORY PROBLEMS

So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of  
the enemy. And the waters covered their adversaries; not one of them was left.  
Then they believed his words; they sang his praise. But they soon forgot his  
works; they did not wait for his counsel.... They forgot God, their Savior

Psalm 106.10-13,21

JONAH – SEE OURSELVES AND BE WARNED THAT WE MUST REPENT

SEE THE MISSION AND REALIZE THAT GOD IS THE ONLY SAVIOR

SEE LORD - REMEMBER THAT HE IS MERCIFUL, SOVEREIGN, SAVIOR

Remember Jesus Christ...

2 Timothy 2.8

Jonah 1:1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.” 3 But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. So he paid the fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD. 4 But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship threatened to break up. 5 Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had lain down and was fast asleep. 6 So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.” 7 And they said to one another, “Come, let us cast lots, that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.” So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. 8 Then they said to him, “Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?” 9 And he said to them, “I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid and said to him, “What is this that you have done!” For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. 11 Then they said to him, “What shall we do to you, that the sea may quiet down for us?” For the sea grew more and more tempestuous. 12 He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you, for I know it is because of me that this great tempest has come upon you.” 13 Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to get back to dry land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more tempestuous against them. 14 Therefore they called out to the LORD, “O LORD, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not on us innocent blood, for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you.” 15 So they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

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